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# JESSE KREMER

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**October 28, 2015**  
**Transportation Committee Public Hearing**  
**Assembly Bill 330**

Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the Transportation Committee for allowing me to speak to you today on this bill.

It is no secret that Wisconsin's transportation fund has reached a tipping point. Many roads, bridges and highways are in desperate need of repair and many projects sit unfinished - posing daily hazards to motorists around the state. Our transportation fund is simply unable to keep pace with the growing scope and number of current and new projects. This is illustrated by the governor's recent request for \$200 million in bonding to help offset delays on some of the state's more crucial projects. Despite these obvious funding shortfalls, an additional \$180 million was just approved this month by the Joint Finance Committee for a new Department of Transportation (DOT) headquarters at the Hill Farms site in Madison. It is time that we take a different approach.

AB 330 is an attempt, albeit a small one, to help curb some of our non-vital transportation expenditures so that we can help our transportation fund become more solvent. Originally introduced as a budget motion earlier this year, this legislation aims to curb three statewide transportation expenditures: vertical, swing arm ramp gates, digital message boards and closed circuit TV cameras. While these "intelligent roadway" implements are useful additions to our highway system, their continued, extensive use is simply not vital to the rudimentary function of our transportation system. Discontinuation of these expenditures will free up additional funds for much needed road repairs and maintenance.

The first of the three non-essential implements addressed by this bill are the highway on-ramp gates. These gates are railroad-style arms that require manual operation to raise and lower in the event of a highway emergency. The rationale behind their implementation is, understandably, to limit the amount of time an officer spends closing a ramp. At a cost of \$12 – \$15,000 per gate (not including maintenance), DOT has already installed over 400 gates costing between \$5 and \$6 million. This bill would halt installation of the remaining 180 gates, saving between \$2 and \$3 million.

It is important to note that despite other available, more cost effective options, DOT has almost exclusively chosen to implement this type of gate. Less costly and equally as effective alternatives include type III barricades (the common orange and white "Road Closed" barricades, often stabilized with sandbags), typically under \$400 each, and horizontal swing arm gates with orange and white ramp closed signage.

The reality is that each gate option requires some amount of staff or officer time to operate, but none require an officer to be stationed at the on-ramp for an extended period of time. The same desired result, saving officer time, can be achieved with other gate options at a much lower cost.



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The second category addressed in this bill are the dynamic message boards, also known as digital message signs or “DMS.” These signs alert drivers to highway travel times and conditions, as well as traffic death statistics and other messaging. These signs can be either side mounted or overhead, costing \$80-\$90,000 and \$180-\$190,000 per unit, respectively.

The third category, closed circuit television (CCTV), allows officials to monitor highway travel conditions. Per DOT, CCTV systems cost \$55,000 each. By the end of 2017, 139 digital message signs and 410 closed circuit television systems are planned to have been installed statewide. This bill seeks to halt the remaining planned installations of **14** DMS over the biennium, saving anywhere between \$1.1 and \$2.6 million; and **58** remaining CCTV installations, saving approximately \$3 million.

*It is unwise to spend taxpayer dollars on more costly options when more economical options are readily available, or when more pressing needs like maintaining existing roads exist.* The DOT’s use of these non-essential highway additions must be stopped until our state’s transportation fund is more stable. In times like these, it is incumbent on us as legislators to take a close look at where we can make cuts. These are items that we can easily live without, especially considering most of these items have nearly seen full implementation. This bill could free up anywhere between \$6 and \$9 million to be used for existing road maintenance. I believe that we owe it to our constituents to consider all avenues of cost savings, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.